

La Crosse, WI 54601

October 3rd, 2020

RE: Wisconsin Bias Against Mothers and Kids Surviving Abuse

Dear Vernon County Board of Supervisors and all carbon copied on this letter,

My daughter, who was 3 at the time of the first investigation in 2019, made serious allegations about her dad, my emotionally abusive ex-husband, touching our daughter inappropriately. My daughter came to me initially and told me details about her dad “hurting” her vagina. I then called a social worker at Gundersen Health System who then reported to an on-call CPS worker in Vernon County. For a couple months this was investigated by the Vernon County Human Services department. My daughter has had numerous forensic interviews with investigator Joellen Egge, where she’s said horrific details about what her dad has done to her. And she consistently told her story to many people including her mom, grandmother, pediatric hospitalist, ER social worker, and investigator. In the end of the first investigation, there wasn’t enough evidence to convict her father, so my daughter ended up going back to her dad’s.

Months went by and more concerns were brought up again by my daughter and a second investigation was started in early 2020. During the second investigation, it was decided by Angel Olson, social worker, at the county that it was ok for my daughter to go back to her dad’s, even though he was still being investigated, again. Angel and her supervisor thought it was in the best interest of the kid to go back to the man she repeatedly reported as sexually abusing her. After the two months of being investigated, the main investigator on the case tried to make a case to the District Attorney, but the DA didn’t think it was best to take a four-year old to court as a witness, as children so young (4 years old) have immense trouble reporting and speaking for themselves. So no charges were made, and my daughter once again fell in between the cracks of the system. She had to go back to her dad’s and we had to pretend things were normal, knowing that nothing had changed since her earliest reports.

As a mother, I had to hear things coming from my daughter about details of her dad “hurting” her. It was hard sending her back knowing what could be going on and still having my daughter remember these details and still talking about them. Time went on and I could tell my daughter was being told things by her father, trying to confuse her. He was telling her to say things about him never hurting her or saying it was someone else.

It seemed it was a lot of he said/she said going on, which I get. But he pulled the “we have 50/50 placement” so I felt like his needs were routinely considered on even ground with mine and my daughter’s. Especially during the second investigation, I was told to record everything so I had

taken videos of my daughter, Addie, and it seemed like those were never taken seriously. Like I was leading Addie to say things against her father for my own benefit, just to hurt him. During both investigations, I never took my ex to court for more custody/placement, because I was warned not to appear “against him,” but I felt that was brought up in question. Like I could be doing this for other reasons. I felt like I was questioned no matter what, and doubted when I would record all exchanges and conversations between me and my daughter. I felt like I couldn’t advocate for her, they thought I was making up details or not believing anything my daughter said or capturing performances that favored me.

After reading the investigation report, My daughter’s dad would say I was putting these thoughts into her head. And I felt like the social worker sided with him more. Therefore my daughter got to go back to her dad’s with “supervision” during the second investigation. May I add that the supervision was his own mother. And obviously there was no way of monitoring if she was around 24/7 or not.

I want more to be done for the kids who are too young to truly speak for themselves, rather than automatically believing fathers and questioning mothers. It breaks my heart that my daughter had to go through this twice. I can see how it has affected her and continually affects her. She's been in therapy d/t these incidences and who knows how much it will affect her later in life. I ask for justice for my daughter and all the other little kids who spoke up to someone they trust. My daughter trusted me and came to me with something horrible. I can only imagine how difficult that was because I know she loves her dad but he had done something awful to her. I ask that more be done in situations like our’s. Two investigations, many months of trauma for my daughter and myself, and nothing being done but watch it continue. My daughter’s safety is my biggest concern. My feelings toward her dad have nothing to do with anything, though mothers are correct to be afraid and angry. My primary focus is my daughter and I just take blame for not being able to do enough for her during this whole process, no matter which angle I take to help her.

Sincerely,
Local Mom #11